

Description

SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR RECEIVING AND RESPONDING TO PROMOTIONAL OFFERS USING A MOBILE PHONE

BACKGROUND OF INVENTION

[0001] Mobile phone handset manufacturers and wireless carriers are engaged in highly competitive industries. A major concern for these entities is engendering brand loyalty among their customers since it is relatively easy to switch to a different mobile phone brand or to a different wireless carrier. One way to promote brand loyalty is to keep the customer engaged with the handset manufacturer or wireless carrier by offering contests or promotional campaigns that award prizes to the winners.

[0002] To effectively run a promotional campaign requires the sponsor to bear the burden of effort and minimize effort required of the mobile phone user. Thus, the process should be automated to the greatest possible extent.

[0003] In addition, the sponsor can craft a promotion so as to re-

ward specific behavior, such as high-end model purchases, or significant minute usage. Other promotions can serve as a useful means for gathering survey data since the sponsor can specify the format and content of a promotional entry.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

[0004] The present invention describes a method and means by which a mobile phone can participate in a promotional offer that is sponsored by an interested party. Interested parties can include, but are not limited to, mobile phone handset makers and wireless carriers. The sponsor creates a promotional campaign and defines its parameters using promotional offer code (POC) data. The POC data is then pre-provisioned into the mobile phone either at the time of manufacture or via an over-the-air (OTA) process that is transparent to the mobile phone user. The sponsor then advertises the promotional campaign in any number of ways including, but not limited to, direct mail, television commercial, radio commercial, Internet advertisements, e-mail, SMS messaging, or MMS messaging.

[0005] If a mobile phone user becomes aware of the promotional campaign and wishes to participate, he navigates his mobile phone menu structure to a "promotions" menu and

inputs a POC that was included in the sponsor's advertisements. The mobile phone then links the input POC to the pre-provisioned POC data. Another function in the mobile phone then constructs a promotional offer entry (POE) that conforms to the parameters set out in the pre-provisioned POC data. The POE can be an SMS, MMS, or e-mail message, or other mode. The POE is then transmitted to the sponsor. The sponsor reviews all valid entries and chooses one or more winners. The sponsor then broadcasts a status message to all entrants to inform them whether they won anything from the promotion.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

- [0006] Figure 1 is a block diagram of a mobile phone showing components within the mobile phone that are used to carry out the invention.
- [0007] Figure 2 is a data flow diagram illustrating the flow of data between a promotional sponsor and a participating mobile phone.
- [0008] Figure 3 is a flowchart detailing the processes of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

- [0009] Figure 1 is a block diagram of a mobile phone 110 show-

ing components within the mobile phone 110 that are used to carry out the invention.

[0010] Central to the mobile phone 110 is a processor 120 that has control over and access to the other components within the mobile phone that comprise the invention. A graphical user interface (GUI) 130 provides an interface with the user of the mobile phone 110 to navigate and launch a data software application 140, the purpose of which is to receive and respond to promotional offers. GUI 130 displays status information and prompts for input(s) at the behest of the data software application 140 running on processor 120. Processor 120 is also coupled with storage means 150. Storage means 150 can be used to store promotional offer data as well as mobile phone data that can be incorporated into a promotional offer entry. An RF module 160 and antenna 170 combination is coupled with the processor 120 and provides a communication link with a promotional sponsor.

[0011] The configuration shown in figure 1 allows for the mobile phone 110 to receive promotional offer data over-the-air (OTA). It further allows a mobile phone user to compose and edit a promotional offer entry via GUI 130 in response to a promotional offer. Once an entry has been composed,

the RF module facilitates sending the entry to the sponsor for consideration. The promotional offer entry is comprised of data that the promotional sponsor has requested from the mobile phone user.

[0012] Figure 2 is a data flow diagram illustrating the flow of data between a promotional sponsor and a participating mobile phone. A sponsor 210 initiates contact either directly or indirectly with potential entrants for a specific promotion. The sponsor may have any number of reasons for running a promotion from information gathering exercises to marketing exercises. For instance, handset makers may wish the mobile phone user to remain loyal to the brand and offer upgrades or accessories via promotional offers. Wireless carriers may also wish to promote brand loyalty by offering service enhancements, free minutes, or other valuable promotional offers.

[0013] Direct contact between a sponsor and a mobile phone would likely occur as an SMS or MMS message sent to the mobile phone describing the promotion and how to enter. Indirect contact between a sponsor and a mobile phone could occur any number of ways, including, but not limited to, a television commercial, a magazine advertisement, a radio commercial, an Internet advertisement, etc.

The indirect solicitation would either detail the promotional offer or provide a source for the mobile phone user to go to obtain details regarding the promotion.

[0014] The sponsor, in one form or another, generates and sends or makes available promotional offer data 220 to the mobile phone. The mobile phone then converts the promotional offer data to a promotional offer entry 230 that is then transmitted back to the sponsor 210. The sponsor then determines a winner or winners.

[0015] Figure 3 is a flowchart illustrating the processes of the present invention in greater detail. There are three entities nominally illustrated in figure 3 including a sponsor 305, a mobile phone 310, and a mobile phone user 315. Data flows among these entities such that a promotional campaign is conducted. The sponsor 305 is responsible for setting up and defining the parameters of a promotional offer. The mobile phone 310 is the physical device used by the mobile phone user 315 to communicate with the sponsor 305 to participate in the promotional offer.

[0016] A promotional campaign begins with the sponsor 305. The sponsor 305 creates and defines the terms and parameters of a promotional offer that will require the use of a mobile phone 310 to participate. The promotional offer

is then advertised publicly 320 to solicit interest from mobile phone users 315. Part of the advertisement could include a promotional offer code (POC) that a mobile phone user would use to participate in the promotional offer.

[0017] In some instances, the POC may already have been provisioned on the mobile phone by the handset maker at the time of manufacture. This would allow a specific mobile phone handset maker the ability to craft and sponsor promotions that could only be entered by mobile phones made by that handset maker. The motivation for the mobile phone handset maker could be to reward and engender brand loyalty. In this scenario, the mobile phone handset maker would embed POCs into the mobile phones for later use.

[0018] In other instances, a POC can be passively provisioned 325 to a qualifying group of mobile phones in an over-the-air (OTA) manner. This could occur when the sponsor is a wireless carrier. The wireless carrier has the ability to send OTA data to a mobile phone on their network in a passive manner. The mobile phone would simply receive and store 330 a POC without direct mobile phone user involvement. The wireless carrier's motivation could be similar to that of a mobile phone handset maker, namely, re-

ward and engender brand loyalty.

[0019] Once the promotional campaign is designed and advertised it is up to individual qualifying mobile phone users 315 to participate. The first step for the mobile phone user 315 is to become aware of the promotional offer (PO) 335. Once aware, the mobile phone user 315 would then decide whether to participate 340. If the mobile phone user 315 desires to participate he navigates his mobile phone's menu structure to a "promotions" screen and enters the POC from the advertisement into the mobile phone 345 via a graphical user interface (GUI). The mobile phone 310 then compares the POC just entered 350 with a list of stored POCs 355. If a match is found, the mobile phone then constructs a promotional offer entry (POE) 360 based on the stored POC data.

[0020] Constructing a POE from POC data entails composing a message to the sponsor that will indicate the mobile phone user's desire to participate in the promotional offer. The POC data specifies to whom the message should be addressed, how the message will be sent, and what content is to be included or attached to the data. The data is then fetched and included with the message to form a promotional offer entry (POE). If the POC data specifies

that the user enter additional data, the software application will launch a template that the user will fill out. This data is then included with the POE.

[0021] The data that can be attached to form a POE can be device specific. For instance, mobile phone identifying data (e.g. electronic serial number (ESN), International mobile equipment identity (IMEI) model number, and/or mobile telephone number) can be included in a POE. Service information such as carrier name, minutes used, amount of data sent and received, and number of SMS and/or MMS messages exchanged can be specified as well. The sponsor can then parse this data to glean valuable demographic information pertaining to the customers and their user characteristics. Some carriers may have higher data usages than others. Such information would help the handset makers market and promote to specific carriers or even specific regions that exhibit different characteristics.

[0022] Since the POE may include sensitive personal information, it can be encrypted before being sent to the sponsor. This is an extra measure of security that protects both the sponsor and participant.

[0023] Consider a scenario where a handset maker is the sponsor

310. The promotional offer is extended to mobile phone users that have a particular model made by the handset maker. Thus, the POC data can specify that a valid POE contain the electronic serial number (ESN) of the phone. This information can be used by the handset maker (sponsor) to verify that the mobile phone is indeed the model identified in the promotion.

[0024] Consider another scenario where a wireless carrier is the sponsor 310. This time a promotional offer is extended to that carrier's subscribers that have used over 1000 minutes of airtime in the last thirty (30) days. The POC data for this promotion requires a valid POE to come from a mobile phone that meets the aforementioned minutes used parameter. When a POE is constructed from using the POC data, the mobile phone accesses and verifies and attaches the mobile phone's minutes used data to the POE. The wireless carrier can then select from among the entrants a winner. A bonus prize could even go to the entrant with the most minutes used in the last thirty (30) days with this entrant identified as "super-user of the month".

[0025] By setting different promotional parameters, sponsors can identify and reward certain customers. Wireless carriers

can run promotions for high use customers (like that in the scenario above) or new users (those who have signed a service contract in the last sixty (60) days) in order to get and keep them engaged with the sponsor.

[0026] Once the POE has been constructed 355, it is then sent from the mobile phone to the sponsor 365. The sponsor 310 receives POEs 370 from a variety of entrants. The POC data could specify a time limit to participate so that the sponsor knows when to stop accepting entries. Alternatively, the POC data could be programmed with a time limit such that a POE could not be constructed after a pre-determined date. Once all entries have been received by the sponsor, a winner or winner(s) can be selected 375. The sponsor could then broadcast the promotion status 380 to all entrants or only those that actually won something. The mobile phone would receive 385 (most likely in the form of a message (SMS or MMS), e-mail, or voice mail) notification of the promotional offer status from the sponsor concluding the promotional campaign.

[0027] Computer program elements of the invention may be embodied in hardware and/or in software (including firmware, resident software, micro-code, etc.). The invention may take the form of a computer program product,

which can be embodied by a computer-usable or computer-readable storage medium having computer-usable or computer-readable program instructions, "code" or a "computer program" embodied in the medium for use by or in connection with the instruction execution system. In the context of this document, a computer-usable or computer-readable medium may be any medium that can contain, store, communicate, propagate, or transport the program for use by or in connection with the instruction execution system, apparatus, or device. The computer-usable or computer-readable medium may be, for example but not limited to, an electronic, magnetic, optical, electromagnetic, infrared, or semiconductor system, apparatus, device, or propagation medium such as the Internet. Note that the computer-usable or computer-readable medium could even be paper or another suitable medium upon which the program is printed, as the program can be electronically captured, via, for instance, optical scanning of the paper or other medium, then compiled, interpreted, or otherwise processed in a suitable manner. The computer program product and any software and hardware described herein form the various means for carrying out the functions of the invention in the example embodi-

ments.

[0028] Specific embodiments of an invention are disclosed herein. One of ordinary skill in the art will readily recognize that the invention may have other applications in other environments. In fact, many embodiments and implementations are possible. The following claims are in no way intended to limit the scope of the present invention to the specific embodiments described above. In addition, any recitation of "means for" is intended to evoke a means-plus-function reading of an element and a claim, whereas, any elements that do not specifically use the recitation "means for", are not intended to be read as means-plus-function elements, even if the claim otherwise includes the word "means".